

How to find a Reputable German Shepherd Dog Breeder

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Before you start to shop, know what you want.

[Read this article](#) about the 5 main types of German Shepherd Dogs and then go out to shows, trials, clubs and meet dogs and ask questions about them.

Looking at websites...

1. There are some easy things to spot right off the top. Breeders who are breeding dogs out of the [breed standard](#) is a big **RED FLAG**. This includes dogs that are off colour (in the German Shepherd Dog breed this includes; liver, blue, panda, isabella...). Reputable breeders do not breed for specific colours. It also includes dogs that are out of standard in size. The GSD is not a large breed dog. Males should be no larger than 90lbs.
2. Start by looking at the females the breeder is breeding. Are full registered names listed? Is the dog's pedigree available either on the page or by a link to a database? Take note of the quantity of females they have in their breeding program. You can technically breed a female twice a year (and there is nothing wrong with breeding a bitch back to back) but it is more normal to breed a bitch once per year. If the kennel has 10+ breeding females how many litters are they producing? It's a LOT of dogs and now the breeder is more than just a hobby breeder and is more of breeding business. Is this bad? Think about what it takes to properly raise a litter of puppies and now multiply it by 10+. Now, sometimes these females are farmed out to other people to live and then come back to the breeder for breeding. I am not a fan of this practice.
3. Sticking with the females, where did they come from? To figure this out is quite easy. What is the kennel name of the females? Is it the same as the kennel you're looking at? If a breeder just constantly buys dogs to breed there is no actual breeding program. If their dogs are good enough for you, why are they not good enough for their own breeding program?
4. Next, pick one of the females and look closer. What is the description of the dog? Does the breeder talk about how cute, funny, sweet and cuddly the dog is? Is that in anyway relevant to breeding? Is it relevant to the breed? Does the breeder rely on how great the parents,

grandparents or great-grandparents of this dog were? Breeding is taking a dog and proving it is worthy of breeding. A great pedigree is a start, but it only a start. What has THIS dog actually accomplished?

5. When we look at accomplishments in a breeding dog we are talking about titles. Because of the split in the breed between show and working, this will also mean there is a difference between working and show titles. This is a bit difficult to weed through but basically it means that a breeder of show lines should have show titles and a working breeder should have working titles. Even better, breeders who follow SV standards of breeding have BOTH. Working titles are Schutzhund titles (now called IGP). Conformation ratings and titles are shown before the dog's name, working and performance are after the name. Many breeders list certificates as titles. These took very little effort and are not breed specific. They include; CGN, CGN, HIC etc...

Now, if you are purchasing a puppy solely as a pet or companion you're thinking "this doesn't matter, [I just want a pet](#)". It does matter, it matters a great deal. Why are you looking to buy a GSD? Do you want a dog that looks like a GSD or do you actually want a GSD? What are you paying for? Anyone can take two GSDs and breed them together and sell puppies, if that is all that matters to you - go rescue a dog and don't support bad breeders. If you want an actual GSD, follow these guidelines.

6. Keep looking at this female - is she fully health tested and certified? North American GSD breeders use [OFA](#), [SV a-stamp](#) and [PennHip](#). Dogs from other countries use other systems. **IS PROOF PROVIDED?** (Copies of certificates or links to a database) Yes, some breeders lie so proof is essential **BEFORE** you buy. Minimal health testing includes; Hips, Elbows, Degenerative Myelopathy. For younger breeding dogs I would add spine, shoulders, eyes and heart.
7. Next, look at the litters they are producing or have produced. Are they simply breeding their females to their own males and then continuing the

rotation? It is highly unlikely that their own male is the best choice for EVERY female they own. It's much easier and cheaper to do it this way, but it isn't the best way to run a breeding program.

8. Now look at how they sell their puppies. A lot of breeders do not post their prices but if they do, are they charging more for different puppies? Why? Males are not worth more than females, coat length or colour does not make a puppy more valuable. By posting different prices it's like going to buy a television...the one priced higher **MUST** be better right? It does not work this way with puppies. Some show breeders charge more for "Show Quality" puppies. Is showing something you are interested in pursuing? If it is, have someone who knows take a look at the litter and at the conformation of the puppy to let you know that this puppy has what it takes. Most show breeders will tell you they know, but there are no guarantees your puppy will do well in the show ring.
9. Along with price, do they talk about "pick" puppies? What does that mean? They decide which one is the best and charge more? Do they let people pick their dog based on a 'first come, first serve' basis? Shouldn't you want the puppy that is best suited to what you're looking for? **Good breeders match puppies with buyers.**
10. Registration. This is a no-brainer. All reputable breeders register their puppies with the FCI approved kennel club. In the USA it's [AKC](#), in Canada, [CKC](#). There is no way around this. There are two types of registration; full or limited. Neither really matters unless you plan to show the puppy in AKC or CKC conformation. Otherwise the limited registration only prevents any puppies you breed from this dog to be registered. The limited registration is usually lifted if you comply with the standards set out by the breeder to breed your dog. The problem are breeders who **SELL** these breeding rights. An eight week old puppy is not "breed worthy" and will not be proven for years. Selling the rights to breed this dog is unethical. Paying an extra \$500 for these rights is not the way a reputable breeder does business.

11. Contracts and Guarantees. Most breeders have a contract and to be honest I've not read many. I do not have one by my own choice and thankfully, up to now, I've not needed one. There is nothing wrong with having a contract but **READ** it before you consider buying. What does the breeder want you to do? Most are standard and have standard clauses like you can't sell your dog without informing the breeder etc... What else does it say? Do you have to feed your dog specific food? specific supplements? Do you have to spay or neuter your puppy? *Are you comfortable with these requirements?*
12. Health guarantees. Breeders use the word Guarantee when they mean Warranty. No breeder can offer you a guarantee, they cannot assure you nothing will ever go wrong. A hip guarantee is an industry standard rather than a guarantee of quality. What they will tell you, right after the word guarantee, is what their warranty is. Warranties usually consist of replacing the defective dog by returning the dog to the breeder or giving you a free second dog. You will have to take a pup of the breeder's choosing and it may be related to your already compromised puppy. You will now be saddled with two dogs (or forced to give up a dog you have already grown attached to) plus the costs of treating the health issue. So, just because a breeder has a health guarantee doesn't mean their dogs are any healthier.
13. There is more to look for but these points are a great place to start. You should have this dog for over a decade don't rush into buying a puppy based on emotion.

